

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit, participated as Chief at the Bhumi Puja of Akshaya Patra's Kitchen for Kaalai Unnavu Thittam organised by Greater Chennai Corporation and Akshaya Patra Foundation

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit, participated as Chief at the Bhumi Puja of Akshaya Patra's Kitchen for Kaalai Unnavu Thittam organised by Greater Chennai Corporation and Akshaya Patra Foundation at Mackey's Garden, Greams Road, Chennai today (15.02.2020) and addressed the gathering.

Hon'ble Governor said , "I am delighted to be here today for the Bhoomi Pooja of Centralised Kitchen for Kaalai Unavu Thittam for School Children in Chennai City being jointly organised by The Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Greater Chennai Corporation.

On this day, we celebrate a momentous occasion that will help us, as a State, take a step further in the direction of fulfilling the nutritional requirements of our students.

Kaalai Unnavu Thittam, a breakfast programme run by Akshaya Patra Foundation for 5,000 students studying in Corporation Schools, inaugurated by me in February 2019. Starting with humble beginning, the programme is successfully going on till date. The small beginning that we made last year as a joint partnership of Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Greater Chennai Corporation has achieved mammoth proportions and acquired a nationwide stature.

When the idea of starting the breakfast scheme was told to me, I was elated and took no time to agree to inaugurate this scheme, because I understand the importance of having a sumptuous breakfast. I understand that in order to feed the mind, you must first feed the body. Further, having seen the operations of Akshaya Patra in Nagpur, Guwahati and their impressive track-record of almost 20 years, convinced me that this was the best way the breakfast programme could be launched. The success of this programme has convinced me to find and extend this scheme to more than 12,000 Corporation school students.

Nurturing children is equivalent to nurturing the future of our nation. Healthy children develop better learning and understanding abilities. Well-nourished children go on to become productive members of the society who are better equipped to make the maximum use of their talents and abilities for the benefit of society.

The nutritional needs of a growing child are often directly involved in their emotional and intellectual growth, and the first meal of the day is always crucial in meeting these nutritional requirements. Scientific evidence suggests that children who skip the first meal of the day are often afflicted with headache and the inability to focus in class. On the other hand, children who consume a healthy breakfast show signs of improved cognitive and academic outcomes, along with enhanced memory and attention-span.

Swami Srila Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, has created the Akshaya Patra Foundation with his deep understanding of philosophy and illumined path to be followed by all the mankind. His writings and way of life serve as an inspiration for millions of people.

From its humble beginnings of feeding 1,500 children in Bengaluru in the year 2000, Akshaya Patra has continuously grown to become the world's largest NGO-run school meal programme. Akshaya Patra Foundation is providing breakfast to 18 lakh under-privileged children every day in 13 States of India. It is a commendable achievement indeed.

I must thank the efforts of Shri Madhu Pandit Dasa and his dedicated team that have time and again proved their dedication to the Foundation's cause of being an inexhaustible vessel of food.

I take this opportunity to thank Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and Greater Chennai Corporation for given this land for such a noble cause.

I always believed in education, particularly education of under-privileged students. This project was a God-given opportunity to help them and that was why a sum of Rs. 5 crore was sanctioned towards the construction of this kitchen along with required infrastructure to provide breakfast for 12,000 students studying in Greater Chennai Corporations schools.

The Raj Bhavan will continue to support various initiatives to support the education of under-privileged children of Tamil Nadu and also invite all stakeholders to come forward and support this noble cause.

Social service, which is synonymous with helping people in need, has always been a part of the Indian tradition. It has always been a part of the tradition of India to care for the weak, the poor and the suffering.

Swami Vivekananda who interpreted the essence of India's **Sanathana Dharma** over a 100 years back said, and I quote, **“It is a privilege to serve mankind, for this is the worship of God. God is here, in all these human souls. He is the soul of man.”**

In a similar vein, **Jesus Christ** said, **“Know thou, that in the service of the fellowmen, do thou serveth me.”**

In **Islam**, it is ordained that Charity is a duty unto every Muslim; **“He who hath the means let him do a good act and abstain from an evil one. That is his charity”** said **Prophet Mohammed**.

It is this spirit of compassion and love to extend all possible help to the under-privileged and needy that has made people join hands for a noble cause, thus giving birth to many voluntary and social service organizations such as the ones who have come here today.

Tamil Nadu has always been in the forefront of social welfare initiatives. It is, therefore, no wonder that this programme to provide breakfast to school children is being commenced in Tamil Nadu.

Realizing that the children are the future of the nation and to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds become knowledgeable and energetic citizens of the society, the then Chief Minister Dr. M. G. Ramachandran introduced the “Nutritious Meal Programme” in the year 1982. Tamil Nadu is a pioneer in implementing this Scheme. This programme is implemented successfully since its inception to improve the education of the children where the hunger should not be a hindrance. The Government of India has set up National Nutrition Mission (Poshan Abhiyaan) with a goal to achieve improvement in nutritional status of children from birth to 6 years and also to reduce the prevalence of anaemia among women and adolescent girls.

I want Tamil Nadu Government to take all efforts to make this programme successful and help all the students from Urban, Rural and Tribal areas in Tamil Nadu.

I also invite the NGOs, Corporates, sponsors, volunteers, school teachers, and all stakeholders to work together for implementing this programme successfully. May this movement grow from strength to strength to fulfill the vision of **'Poshit Bharat Shikshit Bharat' – Nourished India, Educated India.**

I wish Akshaya Patra Foundation and the Greater Chennai Corporation all success in their future endeavours.

I extend my best wishes and greetings to the Chairman and other office bearers of Akshaya Patra Foundation. May God bless this foundation in all noble initiatives. My greetings and best wishes to one and all present here.”

On this occasion, Thiru. Edappadi K. Palaniswamy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. O. Paneerselvam, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. K.A. Sengottaiyan, Hon'ble Minister for School Education, Youth Welfare and Sports Development, Thiru. S.P.Velumani, Hon'ble Minister for Municipal Administration, Rural Development, Implementation of Special Programme, Thiru.D.JayaKumar, Hon'ble Minister for Fisheries, Personnel & Administrative Reforms, Dr. V. Saroja, Hon'ble Minister for Social Welfare & Nutritious Noon Meal Programme, Thiru. K.Pandiarajan, Hon'ble Minister for Tamil official Language Tamil Culture and Archaeology, Thiru. Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation, Thiru. Chanchalpathi Dasa, Vice Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

Raj Bhavan, Chennai – 22

Sd/-

Date : 15.02.2020

Addl. Director (PR)